

## Internet Service Providers! Just What Is An ISP?

With all the dotcom and internet advances of the last twenty or so years, you may get lost in the www's, http's, html's, and other miscellaneous acronyms associated with the technology. Perhaps you've heard of ISPs, and maybe you even know that it stands for "internet service providers". However, do you really understand the term and what it means? What is an ISP, and what do they do for you?

ISPs are providers of internet access and related services. In other words, without ISPs, the general public would not have access to the World Wide Web. For a monthly access fee, internet service is provided to consumers by these companies. Two options are recognized in regards to the type of internet access available, termed as dial up and broadband. Internet service can be accessed via dial up connection, usually with a connection not faster than 56 kbit/second. Other options are classified as broadband, provided as wireless access, cable modem, DSL, satellite, fiber optics, and Ethernet. All of these run at speeds ranging from 64 kb to 20Mb per second and sometimes greater.

The first ISPs began in the early 1990's. This was when the Internet became popular for commercial use, provided by companies like Mindspring to a limited customer base in 1994. Most of the small ISPs were run with homemade software using a single server facility located in a garage. Users of these ISPs would pay anywhere from twenty to forty dollars a month for access that was only provided at a speed of up to 14.4 kbit/second and was highly unreliable. At this time, large companies with proprietary software operated completely separate networks (like MSN or AOL).

When V.90 was developed in 1998, download speeds were increased to 56 kbit/second. The internet became a way to advertise and gain business. Prices charged by ISPs began to even out, with a dial up connection typically costing \$19.95 a month. In the 2000's, broadband became a new way to access the internet and quickly began to overtake the sales of dial up connections. Faster, cheaper, and more reliable, this was to be the internet technology of the future.

However, many of the smaller ISPs couldn't afford to use DSL and had no access to cable modem. Therefore, they began to provide their own solutions via wireless internet access technology. Today, this is a commonly used technology.

So what is the future of the ISP? With most ISPs still turning over a profit, it seems they will be around forever. Yet, with the possibility of future free wireless internet access, will consumers continue to pay for subscription services through internet service providers? Why would anyone pay for a service that can be received for free? Perhaps they won't, but that remains to be seen.

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### About the Author

If you are curious about additional information on internet service providers, visit our website at <http://www.ispacme.com> to learn more.